

0291 MAFIA

MAFIA CHIEF IN 'CIA PLOT TO KILL CASTRO' SHOT DEAD

By IAN BALL in New York

SAM GIANCANA, the kingpin of the Chicago crime syndicate and the central figure in recent weeks in the Congressional investigation into alleged CIA plots to assassinate Cuba's Fidel Castro with Mafia help, has been shot dead in his luxurious home in a Chicago suburb.

The body of the 65-year-old gangster was found lying face up on the kitchen floor. He had been shot once in the mouth and five times in the neck.

His killer had emptied all six chambers of his weapon in making sure Giancana was dead.

The weapon was not found, but six .22 cartridges were lying on the floor.

Professional 'hit'

"It seems like a professional 'hit,' but the small calibre of the gun bothers us," Mr Wilbur Reichert the police chief said. Gangland killings are usually committed with shotguns or large-calibre weapons.

Robbery was ruled out as a motive. The house was not ransacked and about 1,400 dollars (£609) was found on the body.

Giancana's caretaker, Joseph DiPersio, 32, found the body just before midnight on Thursday.

Giancana and another underworld figure, John Roselli, were involved in CIA contingency

plans to assassinate the Cuban leader in the early 1960's, according to recent disclosures by Mr Richard Bissell, the head of the CIA's "dirty tricks" section at the time of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

Before Castro's revolution overthrew the dictator Fulgencio Battista, Giancana held extensive gambling interests in Havana.

He had worked his way up through the ranks of the crime syndicate built by Al Capone, and in the post-war years invested much of the fortune he had amassed in casinos in Cuba.

£434,000 income

In recent years, Giancana, a widower, is said to have had an income of more than \$1 million

(£434,000) a year, but he lived in partial seclusion, usually venturing out of his large house in Oak Park, Illinois, only for a round of golf.

With Congressional committees still pursuing their investigations into alleged CIA wrongdoing and political acts outside the agency's charter, Giancana was expected to be summoned to Washington at some point to appear as a witness at the hearings.

According to one former senior CIA official who has provided details of the incident to the American Press, the CIA's scheme to involve the Mafia, particularly gangsters with Cuban connections, in a plot to murder Castro, was hatched without the knowledge of the then attorney-general, Robert Kennedy, or his brother, President Kennedy.

Mafia death squad

Others with inside knowledge of the CIA's contingency planning to remove Dr Castro have said that Giancana was approached by CIA agents and agreed to set up a force of Mafia "soldiers" who would be trained in guerrilla tactics, enter Cuba and kill the Cuban leader.

Giancana was soon able to recruit a small band of Spanish-speaking gangsters from among the men he had worked with during the fat years in Cuba.

The CIA allegedly advanced up to \$100,000 (£43,400) to recruit, house, arm and train Giancana's former Havana associates, scores of whom were living in Miami in the early 1960s as exiles from Castro's Cuba.

Giancana is said to have borrowed \$90,000 (£39,100) from his own and other crime syndicates to augment the clandestine funds from the CIA.

There has been speculation that the *quid pro quo* here was a tacit agreement that Giancana's path would somehow be smoothed in re-establishing his tremendously lucrative gambling operations in Havana once Dr Castro had been "removed" and a more moderate government had replaced his brand of Communism.

Giancana is at least the second man in the alleged CIA plot against Castro to die violently.

Richard Cain, a Chicago policeman-turned-gangster, has been named as the man who did the actual recruiting of Spanish-speaking gangland figures who were to have been smuggled into Cuba.

In December, 1973, he was brutally killed in a sleazy Chicago cafe.



Sam Giancana